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THE CHIMNEYPiece

OF BRUGES





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THE
CHIMNEYPEACE OF BRUGES,
AND OTHER POEMS.

THE
Chimneypiece of Bruges,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
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THE
CHIMNEYPiece OF BRUGES.

THE CHIMNEYPiece OF BRUGES.

FOUR centuries, with all their weight of woe,
Have rolled across the world, since one bright day
In which was wrought a tragedy as dark
As any, history's page recorded holds.

A.D. 1479.

It was a morning full of the glad light
Of early summer, when the trees put on
Their softest tints of green, and birds do sing
And carol all the happy hours of May.
Fair upon ancient Brugës fell the rays
Of joyous sunlight, touching pointed roofs
With gold, making white fronts of houses beam
Like angels' wings, bright'ning the belfry brown
And towers of ancient churches, till the walls
And mighty gates against the foe reared up
Had well nigh lost their grimness in the glow.

Outside the walls floweth the great canal
Which carries boats and merchandise to Ghent ;

A pleasant roadway on the further side
Follows its course ; and here, beneath the trees
On that bright morning, with a springing step,
Walked the young burgher Andrea, blithe and gay.
His velvet mantle fluttered in the breeze,
The rapier glittered, by the sunbeams kisst,
And the small shadows of the shaken leaves
Danced o'er him as he past, and passing sang,
Out of the very gladness of his soul,
A song all sparkling with the joy of life.
For not a care had Andrea : passing rich,
His friends were kind, or seemed so ; and his wife—
Marie the fair, the Rose of Brügge hight,
Pure as a pearl, and lovely as the day—
Two months before had made the sweetest bride
The town had e'er turned out to look upon.
He had but lately left her presence now,
And in the lay he sang was shrined her name,
A relic under filigree of gold !

ANDREA'S SONG.

O joyous birds !
Who carol high,
Who twitter low,
Who flutter nigh,
Then soar away

.

Far, far, above the ken of man !
 O song-men sweet !
 Your notes repeat
 In lovely May,
 When lilies blow,
And all men wander forth who can ;
 O blessèd birds !
 “ Marie ! Marie ! ”

 O flow'rets fair !
 Along my path,
 Ye touch the banks
 In summer rath,
 With golden light
And gleams of glory from the skies !
 Each blessèd day
 Of holy May
 Your missals bright,
 Give Marie thanks—
Ah ! fleet the month of Marie flies !—
 O flow'rets fair !
 “ Marie ! Marie ! ”

 O waters bright !
 Ye softly slide
 By city towers,

Or gently glide
In silence deep
Where only Heav'n above you lies.
But sunbeams smile
On ev'ry mile,
As on ye creep
'Mid birds and flowers,
As gray and clear as Marie's eyes !
O waters bright !
" Marie ! Marie !"

E'en as he closed his song he turned across
To pass through Porte Ste. Catherine to the town
When, from its deep embrasure, came a voice—
" Marie ! the sweetest name that's heard on earth
Stands highest in the kalendar of Heav'n !"
Half fervent and half mocking was the tone ;
And Andrea started, coming face to face
With one who sprang towards him suddenly.
" Henri ! Good faith ! I took thee for a ghost,
Having no earthly adjunct but a voice !"
But Henri laughed, a hard and mirthless laugh—
" I am not yet so harmless as a ghost !
For, hearing thy gay carol from afar,
I hid myself and waited thine approach,
To wake thee from the happy dreams of love."

Andrea responded, with a sunny smile,
"It matters not, my friend, what dreams may fly
When all that dreams can image is our own!"—
The sun was shining brightly, and the breeze
That blew through the old gateway was as soft
As airs which swept o'er Eden ere the Fall.
Why did the speaker shiver when the words
Had left his lips? why draw his velvet cloak
Closely across his breast? Henri's dark face
Was turned away a moment from his gaze,
Then he smiled back at Andrea: "Hast thou time
To spare from the due worship of thy bride
To play a game of hazard with thy friend?"
"Yea, truly!" answered Andrea: "Marie now
Is busied with her household, like that wife
Whose praise is in the Proverbs, saith our priest.
Let us go hence, to Mynheer Van Mael's inn
Which stands by Notre Dame—it is not far
From both our homes—and pass a pleasant hour
Ruling the fates of painted kings and queens."

Down the long Rue Ste. Catherine they passed,
Till at its end they came upon the church,
And close beside it, that most splendid house
Of the rich Sire de Gruthuyse: eight years since
They two had stood there oft, to watch his guest,

The handsome English Edward, mount a horse ;
And passing by, they spake of those old days,
With later ones, when Henri was away
At Brussels, learning from a man of law.
“ There thou might'st well have loved, one would
 have thought,
My Marie,” Andrea said ; “ yet it appears
That, walking daily in the happy streets
Which saw the growing of her girlhood fair,
And speaking with her oft-times in her home,
Thou still didst pass all heedless on thy way !
Then, when at length her father back returned
From years of exile to his native Bruges,
Bringing its fairest flower, I wondered oft
That thou couldst see such beauty all unmoved.”
Here Andrea stopt : for they had reached the door
Of Mynheer Van Mael's hostelrie, the Fox.
And ent'ring first, he saw not the strange look
In Henri's eyes, nor how his dark cheek paled,
But gaily called for cards, and led the way
To a small table in a deep recess,
Where a lad brought them mugs of Flemish ale.
Then, ere the game began, both doffed their caps,
And the soft sunlight from the window near
Fell full on Andrea—on his chestnut curls,
His strong white hands ; and brightened his blue
 eyes,

And seemed a sort of glory round him shed.
This caught the eye of Henri as he sate
In shadow opposite, and brought to mind
A picture of a martyr he had seen
In some fine church of Brussels long before.
Next came the thought : " This man whom I once
loved—

This man whom I now hate, as demons hate
The angels who have hurled them down to hell—
This happy handsome man, who is too glad,
Too full of his own joyous view of life,
To see the chasm yawning at his feet—
How is *he* like that martyr ? Truly soon,
If Marie will, it may be I shall teach,
As well as any priest, ' it is not good
To rest too much on any earthly joy !'
And yet, again, it may be——" Here the voice
Of Andrea, breaking through his musings dark—
" Alas ! thou'lt take my queen, and she was all
By which I hoped to win the game ; my hand
To-day is poor, the cards are not well mixt."
But playing skilfully he long held out,
While Henri set a question on that game
And played it as if reading his own fate ;
Nor spake again, nor raised his coal-black eyes
Until he cried to Andrea, " I have won !

Behold the Knave of Hearts here in mine hand !”
The other laughed his careless merry laugh :
“ Yea ! thou hast won ; it is not often so !
Methought my luck was changeless, but it proves
Like that of other men. Shuffle the pack,
And let me try to bring it back again.”
But Henri paused : “ I would, in sooth, dear friend,
Had I not just bethought me of a thing
I should have done ere playing here with thee.
My mother bade me bring her quickly news
Of a sick friend near Porte Ste. Catherine :
I went, and asked about him, it is true,
But meeting thee, forgot to bear her word.
Thou knowest that her wrath is no light thing ;
So let me run and tell her of his state,
And wait thou here until I come again,
Sooner than thou hast dealt out all the cards.”
He rose, put on his cap, and smiling went
(A smile that faded ere he reached the door) ;
While Andrea, left alone, shuffled the cards,
Then took a draught of ale, and dealt them out.
Next he leant back and idly hummed an air,
Noting how rude and yet how quaintly strong
Stood out some carved work o’er the chimney wide,
Wrought by a trav’ling craftsman who had come
To stay awhile in Bruges at the Fox.

And gazing so, he thought : "I have some skill
Acquired from a more learned man than this,
Which Marie oft has praised, when I have carved
Some trifle for the house ; to pleasure her,
I'll have a cunning workman set fine wood
Over the fireplace of our dining hall,
And by the magic of my artist hand
Will people it with forms which shall endure
Long after ours have mouldered into dust.
My Marie ! men of times to come shall see
Thine image there, and marvel as they say,
' Behold the loveliness of Andrea's wife !'
In sooth I'm glad that Henri left me here
To gain this thought from very idleness.
Good lack ! this spring air has a chill to-day,
Or some one is too active o'er my grave !
Twice I have shivered as with wintry cold.—
Ah, Henri ! here at last ! Come, sit thee down ;
I had good time to shuffle well the cards !
I judge thou found thy mother deemed thee slow
In bringing her the message, and blazed up,
And thou hast stayed to soothe her down again."
" Why, yes," said Henri, as he took his cards
And held them with a hand that slightly shook.
" But then she said while I was out had come
A post from Brussels, from her brother there,

To ask me to conduct a case for him
This coming week ; so I must leave fair Bruges,
And thee, dear friend, ere sets to-morrow's sun ! ”
“ Poor Henri ! thou art pale ! this sudden news
Has startled thee from out the pleasant dream
Of placid life in Brügge. Troth ! my friend,
It grieves me too ; but let us play our game ;
The last, perchance, for many months to come.”
The gaudy gilded leaves, ablaze with red,
And blue, and purple, on their upper side,
According to the fashion of the time,
Flasht from hand to hand, while Andrea's luck
Stood firm once more, and soon he won the game ;
Then rising, said to Henri, “ Thy dismay
At going back to Brussels, I believe,
Has let me win more quickly than is wont !
Now I must hence ; Marie will welcome thee
If thou wilt come to share our noontide meal.”
“ I cannot come ! I must prepare—to leave.
Commend me to fair Marie ! So, adieu ! ”

They parted in the doorway of the Fox,
And Henri went straight home ; his mother's
house
Stood on the Dyver, facing a canal.
Andrea's, a few yards further, in the street

Still called the Rue de l'Eechout : the end house,
Joining the Dyver. He went not direct,
But turned into a lane behind the church,
To seek a carpenter to do the work
Which he had plann'd while waiting at the inn.
The man was out ; so Andrea, leaving word
That he should come for orders to the house,
Turned thitherward himself, full of bright thoughts
Of how his darling would rejoice to see,
Day after day, the creatures of his skill
Rise from the level surface of the wood.
Upon the Dyver, as he passed the home
Of Henri, for a moment's space he saw
Him, looking from a casement just above,
And with a shade of sadness for his loss,
Andrea past on and stood at his own door.

He claspt the carved handle of the latch
And lifted it, and pressed the pond'rous gate,
Which yielded a foot's space, and then stood fast.
Surprised, he pushed again ; when Something red
Came slowly from beneath !—" God !"—with one
gasp,
With one low cry of horror and of dread,
He flung the force of his young manhood's might
Against the dumb resistance of the door,

And its Dead Weight gave way another foot,
When from the impetus he fell within—
Not on the bare stone floor, but all across
A woman's feet and long blue 'broidered robe!

Dabbled with blood he rose! Alas! he knew
The garb his Marie had that morning worn,
When he went forth all joyous for his stroll.
And yet his brain refused to trust his eyes.
His laughing Marie, this strange senseless Thing?
This ghastly corpse, with wide dull staring eyes
And jaw fallen low in death? with golden hair
Just showing 'neath a coif whose outer edge
Was crimsoned with the stream of her young life?
The dagger that had pierced her gentle heart
Lay near it, the bright blade all dim with gore!
And Andrea sickened at the sight, and yet
Still as a statue stood, as turned to stone,
A minute's space; the pause before the storm
Of his wild grief brake out with one mad shriek.

His cry the household heard, and forth they came—
Had Marie fallen without a sound? or why
Did no one rush to stay her murd'rer's hand
Or bring the wretch to justice, if too late?
Why? save that menials never notice aught

Which might help those who feed them, only things
To turn to their discredit or their loss.

So now they came full quickly at that cry,
One man and two stout maids, and found their lord
Kneeling beside the body of his wife,
All bloody, with the dagger in his hand !

And then they gave the wail they should have raised
A short time sooner, and the passers-by
Stopt startled in the street at such strange sounds.
And looking in at the half open door
One turned, and called for help, and "Murder ! ho !"
Then shuddering stood, nor dared to look again
At the grim sight which that one glance had shown,
Until a new man came, in haste to see,
Who also shouted "Murder !" and drew back.
And thus a crowd collected, in less time
Than one may tell how rapidly it grew.
And last among them came two Justices,
Old men, who had known Andrea from his birth.
These found him with the dagger still in hand,
But risen now, and gazing on the corpse
As if bereft of sense. And seeing there
The Rose of Bruges lie blasted at his feet,
Whom last they had seen blooming at a feast,
They stood as mute as less important men.

'Twas Andrea broke the silence. "Am I mad?"
Is this a dream? a fearful dream? O! God!
Help me to wake!" Then stooping, laid his hand—
The left—on Marie's, lying on the ground;
Recoiled, and dropt the dagger at her feet,
And turning wildly to the crowd behind—
"Ah, friends! ye come too late to save her now!
Too late! alas! Did no one see the blow
Which laid her here, and hurled me from the height
Of heaven, down to the deep abyss of hell?
Did no man see it?" in a whisper hoarse,
Holding out shaking hands towards his friends.
"See it?" a hasty youth flung answer back.
"Good Mynheer Andrea! not a man in Bruges
But would have fenced yon dainty golden head
From harm, with his own life, and been full glad!"
The brave lad's words went home to Andrea's
heart—

Hardly the words; but through the mist of woe
He felt their kindly sense like sunbeams fall.
And one deep sob broke from him, as again
He turned to where she lay; and then his glance
Fell on the servants as they stood behind,
Near their fallen mistress, all agape and pale.—
Here they had been, all three, within the house
While that dread deed was doing three yards off!

This fact had flasht on Andrea's mind at last
As his shocked brain recovered power of thought.
"And ye! how was it ye heard naught, nor came?"
The menials all were silent for a space,
Then one, a woman, framed their cold excuse :
"Mynheer, it was not any work of ours
To follow our fair mistress round the house.
So, by no fault of ours she met her death."
"'Tis strange," a Justice said, "ye did not hear
Some cry from the poor lady as she fell,
With casements open just above the court,
And ye, we may suppose, at work within."
"An't please you, sirs, we were all three at work
Quite at the mansion's rear ; the maids upstairs,
I, in the garden, planting some new shrubs.
Not half an hour ago my lady came
To point out places where she wished them set,
And then went quickly back into the house.
I saw her not again until just now ;
When, having set the plants, I came within
To take her orders for my further work.
Then, as I entered the great hall, I heard
A noise, your worships, from the entrance door—
A strange dull noise, and then an awful cry,
A shriek that seemed to rend the very air.
The women heard it, and came rushing down,

And out together from the house we ran,
To find my master here, dagger in hand,
With blood upon his garments, as ye see,
And the good mistress lying murdered thus.”
So spake the man whom Andrea’s kindness once
Had saved from starving. And the fickle crowd
Woke to a new suspicion at his words.

Andrea heard not the last ; that picture sweet
Of Marie giving orders ’mid the shrubs
Contrasted with her body at his feet,—
Her lifeless body, powerless and still,
Never again to pass with free firm step
About the house, filling it with the light
Of her fair presence, and the sweet clear tones
Of voice and laughter musical and glad,—
Had made too sharply clear his sense of loss
For the wrung heart or tortured brain to bear ;
And all unconscious of the fatal doubt
Cast on him by his servant’s words, he sank
In a deep swoon upon the friendly arm
Of one of the old Justices, whose strength
Only sufficed to let him gently down,
Cold, pale, and senseless, at his dead wife’s feet.

There was a stir amid the crowd at this,
While one was heard to murmur—“ Mark ye that ?

Why should he faint just now and not before ?”
The kindly youth who spake to Andrea first
Knelt down beside him then, to bare his throat ;
And turning sharply on the serving man—
“ Go, sirrah ; get me water to restore
The master unto whom thou owest all !
Low breeding learns no gratitude, I trow,
Yet keep thy thoughts within thine own black heart.
But here a Justice interposed : “ Good youth !
We pass no judgment on the matter here.
There must be good grounds ere we tax our friend
With witting aught of poor Vrouw Marie’s death.
Meseems it now were decent to remove
The corpse to her own bower, and leave her maids
To make her comely for her long repose.
But first let Andrea from the spot be borne
And laid upon a settle in the house ;
That when he wakes once more to life and woe
It may not be amid this ghastly scene.”
Two neighbours, at the old man’s words, came close,
And lifting Andrea, bore him to his hall,
The large chief chamber, where his thought had
 been
To carve for Marie a fine mantelpiece.
They left the friendly youth to tend him there,
And hastened back to help remove the corse.

A strong sail-cloth was brought, and passed beneath,
And then kind hands raised rev'rently the form
To which, an hour ago, they might have dreamt
Dim death could never come ; and by the door
Her own light feet so lately must have passed,
The feet of four, bearing her heavy weight
Crossed the long hall, and laid her in her bower.
Two burghers' wives, whom the great crowd had
brought

To see the matter, from their houses near,
Passed in behind, to take the present charge
Of the dead mistress and the frightened maids.
Her bearers scarce had reached the outer gate,
On their return, when Andrea slowly woke.

“Where am I? In this stream? Is Marie here?
What! am I ill? Sick unto death meseems!—
Darkness, thick darkness round me! And a dream,
Some awful dream!—Air! air! I cannot breathe!
So! now I see. But, Jan, why art thou here?
Marie, where is—— Alas! alas! that door!—
Jan! is it true that she lies murdered there?”
“Dear Mynheer Andrea! God will raise her up
And grant you union in a better world,
Where murderers and such are kept without.”
But Andrea only shivered on his couch
And hid his face, and wrung his strong white hands.

Young Jan could see the gate from where he stood ;
The man-servant was washing from the stones
The signs of carnage, and the crowd stood back,
But still stayed on to gossip and to gaze.
Just then there was a movement in their midst :
They parted to make way for an old man,
Richly yet gravely clad, who past beneath
The doorway's arch, and looked upon the ground,
The servant, and then, turning to the throng,
Seemed to be asking anxiously the cause
Of the strange scene. A Justice signed them all
To silence ; and then, Jan could see, he spoke
To the new-comer, as of some mischance
Far slighter than had really taken place.
The watcher's heart sank lower, for he knew
The tall spare form, a little bent with age,
The silver beard, and silken fur-edged cloak
Of Marie's father, to whose widowed heart
His child was dearer than a miser's gold !
And doubtless now he came, as was his wont
In pleasant weather, from across the town,
To see how fared his darling, and to talk
With his new son about the latest news.—
Lo ! with his friend he turned toward the house ;
And the good lad went back to Andrea's side,
To seek to rouse him from his trance of woe,

Fearing his state would show the whole grim
truth ;

But this the Justice thought of, and he drew
The father, talking, to another room.

Here, with all gentleness and caution, born
Of ancient friendship and a kindly heart,
He gradually revealed that Marie's state
"Was grave." "Nay, wellnigh hopeless." "From
a wound."

But when he had received these answers three
The burgher rose : "Old friend, where is my child ?"
I have not room for any thought as yet
Save that her state will brook of no delay,—
So take me quickly to her ! that these eyes,
These aged eyes, may see the last sad gleam
Of those which were their light for twenty years."
"Yet wait—a moment's space—her maids are there—
And too——" "The leech ? what matters that ? lead
on !"

"Alas ! there is no leech !— we had not time——"
"Not time ? Ah ! do not tell me she is dead !"
A pause ; and then the Justice softly spake :
"Dear friend ! she might have had a death of pain
After long suff'ring : now, we well believe
One pang was all, ere her freed spirit fled."
The old man feebly sank into a seat,

Aged a decade by this unbounded woe.
A few cold bitter tears crept slowly down
His withered cheeks, but still a weary daze
Of half unconscious pain it seemed as yet.
The friend beside him would have liefer seen
A violent grief, which might have worn itself
Out, like a storm, and left him calm again.

The stricken father raised his head at last—
“Why comes not Andrea? Is he also dead?
Fear not to tell me! there is nothing left
Worth sorrow in the world, since she is gone.—
Gone!—but meseems I have not heard as yet
The cause—‘a wound’ didst thou not say? But
how

Came she by wounds— a woman—in her home?”
“That God doth know, my friend, and God must
judge!

All men can tell is that we found her dead
Across the outer entrance of the house,
Stabbed to the heart by one sharp dagger blow,
And Andrea standing over her distraught.”

“My gentle Marie! what a fearful end
Lay hid in God’s dark providence for thee!—
Alas! grief makes us selfish! let me now
Go to poor Andrea—his is equal woe—

That we may mourn together o'er her bier."
So, leaning on his old friend's arm he past
Into the hall ; where Jan in the meantime
Had washed the stains from Andrea's hands and
dress,
On plea that they would shock the father's sight.

Now both the good Samaritans went out
To bid the crowd disperse ; and shut the gate.
The other Justice, they were told, was gone
Forth in the town, to seek for any clue
Which might lead home to who had done the deed.
" The good Saints send he soon may find the
wretch !"

The burgess answered sadly—" Ah ! my lad,
Sixteen is trustful, sixty years hold doubt !"
The two kind friends, one hopeful, one afraid,
Re-entered the great hall, and as they went
A sound of heavy sobbing met their ears.
There, at the upper end, the old man sate,
Near Andrea's settle, in a carved chair—
His grey head bowed with grief, his thin pale hands
Resting on Andrea's shoulders, as he knelt
Low at the father's feet, convulsed with sobs,
Which shook his strong young frame, as in a storm
Trees may be shaken till their boughs give way.

Sad was the scene ; and yet the Justice felt
That Marie's father had not his dark doubt ;
Andrea was still a son, stricken with woe
Deep as his own, upon whose fair bright head
His tears might fall in pity as in pain.
Jan and the burgess at the further end
Of the long chamber stood with sad respect,
Unwilling to intrude on sacred grief.
Only, Jan, looking in his elder's face,
Would seem to seek denial of his doubt.
Whereon the greybeard answered with a shake
Of his sage head : as he would say, " Alas !
These sobs which touch thy heart are but the sign
And sounds of grim remorse which follows crime.
I know the world ; believe me, I am right ! "

Just then, as if in answer to his thought,
The father of poor murdered Marie laid
A soothing hand on Andrea's shining head,
And begged him, in low, broken tones, to calm
" For her sweet sake " the woe her loss had wrought.
" Dark falls the doom on thee as me, my son !
On thee, over whose sunny youth is cast
A shadow which shall darken all thy day.
On me, who had not many years to live,
And now shall sink in sorrow to my grave.

Till then, we are together in this grief ;
So rouse thee, that together we may stand
To look our last upon that angel face
Which made the light of both our lives on earth.”
“ Her face? Oh! father, look not on her face!”—
And Andrea shuddered, raising not his head
From off the old man’s knees, but claspt his robe
And sobbed again, convulsively and wild.
The Justice here came forward, calm and stern.
“ Meseems her father needs must see her face !
And that thy bearing, Andrea, is full strange !
For manhood’s sake restrain thyself, and think
How large a share of sorrow falls to him.”
The hard words wrought what gentle ones had not:
The heavy sobbing ceased, and Andrea rose
And turned his tear-stained face towards his friends,
Ghastly and wan ; no more like the gay youth
Who walked that morning on the sunny road,
Than this sad house was like the home he left.
Then slow, with Marie’s father on his arm,
He past to where she rested in her bower.

At their approach the women all came forth ;
But with the mourners entered the two friends,
Yet stood beside the door. There lay the dead ;
Not ghastly now, but in her bridal robes,

With fair hands laid upon her placid breast,
Over the hidden death-wound, while the face
Had lost the awful look which Andrea saw,
And since had dreaded for her father's sight ;
Kind hands had closed the eyes, and deftly drawn
A silken stay beneath the falling chin,
Till now she lay all beautiful in death.
A wealth of golden hair, washed free from stain,
And with the matron's coif removed, lay loose
About her, as upon her marriage-morn.

The father bent and kissed the marble brow,
The icy lips ; then lifted up his voice
And wept aloud ; and then like Israel's king—
“ My child ! would I had died for thee, my child ! ”
But Andrea in the meantime silent stood,
Rigid and white, but tearless, by the couch
Whereon lay all the blasted hopes of youth.
And in the utter silence of this woe
The Justice found a signet to his thought.
The first dark doubt had slowly gathered strength
Until it reached conviction, in his mind
Accustomed day by day to judge the acts
Of men whom passion moved to break the laws—
To judge them all by certain given rules
Of what would be the motive in each case,

Or what the cause to lead to such result.
And so by now he had poor Andrea's name
Set in a certain column in his head—
A list of murderers who might have loved
The one their jealous fury reft of life.
And holding this, he could not stand and see
The confidence of Marie's hoary sire ;
But, sudden as the Nemesis of fate,
Swept to his old friend's side, and turning then,
Faced Andrea, and spake words which were his
doom !

But slowly through the shadow of his brain
Pierced their dread import ; and the father first
Caught the dark meaning ; startled, raised his eyes
From his dead daughter's face to Andrea's, then,
Roused into speech by such a sudden shock,
“ Old friend, what sayest thou ? That *he* struck the
blow

That laid our loved one here all dumb and cold ?
I cannot think ! I can but *see* my child !
I can but dimly feel that thou art mad !
This awful morning well might turn the wits
Of younger men than we. Alas ! Alas ! ”
The Justice listened with a lofty look,
And would have made reply, but Andrea then
Awakened to the meaning of his speech,

And all amazed, looked wildly in his face ;
Then gasped out—"I? Thou sayest 'twas my
hand
That dashed the cup of joy from my own lips?
That plunged a dagger in this gentle heart
Which only beat for me? Mother of God!
Marie! sweet Patron of my murdered love,
Take me from out this cruel world to her!"
He raised his hands to heaven as he spake,
And Heaven seemed to hear the bitter cry!
The raised hands sank as Andrea, fainting, fell
Across the frozen bosom of his wife.

Her father to the burgess turned : "Behold!
Thy words were as a blow upon his heart.
My son is all that I have left me now!
My Marie loved him, and he loved her well.
Go! Take thy base suspicions elsewhere!"

Then with Jan's help he laid him gently down,
And while the lad was seeking to restore
The wretched Andrea to a sense of woe,
The Justice sought to make his friend retire
To his own house. "Away from this sad scene
Thou wilt be better, and *perchance* ere long
Our watchmen may proclaim the murd'rer found."

“Go hence with thy ‘perchance’! It *must* be so.
He will be found! But till that moment comes
I leave not Marie’s husband, nor her home.”

The burgess lingered till, long afterward,
Andrea gave signs of coming back to life,
Then left to join the gossips in the town,
And seek the other Justice; whom he found
Rating the watchmen, since they brought no
news

Likely to solve the mystery of the crime.
And so the long warm afternoon wore on.
The Council held a meeting in their hall,
And sent forth men to search the city through;
While every man was willing to give help,
For all were full of wonder and regret,
And trade was at a stand-still in the town.
Meanwhile the mourners in that house of woe
Waited for tidings through the weary hours.
In the new danger that now threatened him
Andrea took comfort in the old man’s faith;
While Marie’s father felt the man she loved
Was more to him than aught now left on earth.
So past the long sad day; as days do pass,
However heavy be their weight of woe.
And through it all the belfry chimes rang on,
The weird old chimes which Marie loved to hear;

And when they chimed beneath the bright May
moon

Those two were still together near her couch.

Another morning dawned ; again the sun
Rose up in all his glory over Bruges,
And from short spells of unrefreshing sleep
Woke the two mourners to a sense of loss,
A dim unreal feeling of despair,
Before the full remembrance of their woe
Burst on them like a thunderclap again.
Then, while the morning shadows still lay deep,
And ere the town was very much astir,
Came Henri, to lament his friend's sad chance.
He too was pale and wan, as if the night
Had brought him more of sorrow than of sleep.
With sad respect he greeted the old man,
But Andrea with a passionate regret
Which made him feel how faithful was the friend
Who thus could grieve for knowing of his grief.
Henri explained he came not yestere'en
Because he could not rally from the shock
Of hearing the dire news, within an hour
Of their gay parting at the tavern's door.
The scene was fearful, so he had been told !
And Andrea knew he loved him far too well

To bear to be a witness of his woe.
But now, alas ! when he most wished to stay
To help his friend amid the last sad rites,
Another post from Brussels, urging him
To all despatch, had ridden in last night.
And thus it seemed that he must take his leave,
Not instantly, perhaps, but yet by noon.

Then went he close, and looked upon the corpse,
And showed such feeling, that the father's heart
Warmed towards him as it never had before ;
For Henri was no favourite of his,
Neither of old in Brussels, nor of late ;
Yet now he seemed so gentle and so true
The old man had not heart to hate him more,
When spite of his own haste he lingered still
To see them take a little needed food
To fit them for the trials of the day.
Meanwhile they told him of the Justice' words,
With Andrea's danger, if no clue were found
To trace the criminal ; and his dark face
Paled as he listened : but he shook his head.
" Our friend the burgess will not find a soul
To second him in such a mad surmise."
Soon afterwards he left, to come again
Nearer to noon, and say the sad farewell.

That word was never spoken ; for before
Another hour went round, the Justice came
With his mild comrade of the previous day
And other burgesses ; and in his hand
A scroll, from which he read indictment long
Of Andrea for the murder of his wife !

Who only said : “ Do with me as ye will ;
Life has small value now that she is gone.
If ye condemn me, sooner shall I flee
To her, and be at rest for evermore.”
But Marie’s father sternly answered, “ Stand !
And tell us on what grounds ye set the charge !”
“ Mynheer, the grounds are these : no man is found,
Though we have searched this whole great city
through,

Who could have had a motive for the act.
Nor anyone was seen about the house
Save Mynheer Andrea, whom his servants saw
Beside the lady, grasping in his hand
The bloody dagger, which they swore was his,
And lo ! we find his name upon the hilt.”
One moment wavered then the old man’s faith.
He turned to Andrea, but the gaze he met
Of those sad eyes, was not the look of guilt ;
And short the pause before he spake again :

“ Remember, friends, I am a burgess too !
I have a right to sit upon this case,
As any other, and I claim my right !—
Friends did I call ye? your unrighteous act
In bringing guilt upon a guiltless head
Forbids me e’en to mourn my child in peace !
But though my heart is broken by her loss
I still must do my duty as a man,
And justice as a burgess of fair Bruges.
My trust in Andrea stands on stronger ground
Than doth your doubt ; I know him well,
His noble heart, his temper sweet and calm.
And though ’tis true I love him as a son,
My love has not the weakness nor the strength
Of that which often from the tie of blood
Clings to unworthy objects. Now lead on !
And in the Council Hall fair Truth shall stand !”

With burgesses before them and behind
The mourners past beneath the fatal gate ;
And as the old man leant on Andrea’s arm,
He felt him shudder when they stept across
The threshold where his Marie met her death.
Then crossing Rue de l’Eechout, to the right,
Facing towards Rue Dominic, they went ;
That, and the Dyver, full of eager men

And restless women, waiting to catch sight
Of Andrea passing to the Judgment Hall,
And see the bearing of Vrouw Marie's sire.
Then, when the two came forward arm-in-arm,
Grief-worn, but yet united in their woe,
Something that dwells in every human heart,
A sense still handed down from Eden days,
Perceiving dimly what no words may speak
Of the divinity of Love and Faith,
Was touched, and vibrated among the crowd,
And found vent in a sort of smothered cheer,
Just as the party turned into a lane
Of humble houses, a short crooked way
Toward the ancient Palais de Justice.
Arriving there, they saw a crowd beyond
At the main entrance, and a burgess set
A key to a side-door, through which they past
Across the building to the Council Hall.
And waiting in that hall was all the weight
Of Brugës' wisdom ; portly men and grave,
Assembled to give judgment on a case
Such as not one of them had heard before.

The party entering, came a man-at-arms
To lead Andrëa to the prisoner's stand.
A flush of scorn past over his pale face ;

But Marie's father loosed his hold at once,
Then claspt his hand, and walked to his own seat
Among the Justices: who greeted him
Kindly and sadly, but with some surprise,
Both at his presence, with a daughter dead,
And that all kindly grasp of Andrea's hand.
At first there was a murmur of low talk,
With all eyes fixt upon the prisoner's face,
Who shrank not from their gaze, but after once
He had glanced round to see what friends were
there,
Stood as half-absent in his own sad thoughts.

A bell was rung for silence, when a hush
Fell, like the gathering of a mighty storm.
And then stood forth the City Advocate,
Who read the charge and made a learned speech
Which did not throw much light upon the case.
Next were the servants called to tell the tale
Of how they found their mistress lying dead.
The pris'ner was observed to shudder then
And rouse himself to hear the words they spake ;
And whiter grew his lips, as that grim scene
Was all brought back, with many needless words.
Yet at the close he summoned all his strength
To ask one question of the serving-man :

‘Tell me, and tell this court : in all the days
Since I brought home my lovely sainted wife,
Had, to thy knowledge, any sign of wrath
Or word of anger, past between us twain?’
“Not so ! Mynheer, but ever we did deem,
I and the maidens, that thou loved her well.”
Then were the watchmen called, to make it known
How they had sought the whole great city through
And yet no trace of any man could find
Who had been seen to leave that house at noon,
Or had been missing from his home or trade.

And then the dagger, darkened o’er with blood
Was lifted from a table ; at that sight
Andrea grew ghastly, and one set a seat
On which he sank, as overcome with woe.
The lawyer’s eyes were keenly noting all,
And turning to the burgesses at this,
He signed them to attention, and then spake :
“This dagger, Mynheer Andrea, bears thy name,
And by the witness of thy serving-folk
Was seen red in thy hand when that sad scream,
Which we suppose thy lady’s, summoned them—”
“Which ye suppose my lady’s ? Heaven and earth !
Marie was dead when first I found her there !”
“Let me proceed,” spake slow the man of law ;

“Three witnesses have sworn ’twas in thy hand ;
Now, Mynheer Andrea, is this weapon thine ?”

“The dagger is my own, that word is true,
Yet not the one I wear, as ye may see.

That, on yon table, hung within our hall ;

But now, meseems, I have not seen it there

These last few days ; I have not thought before,

Yet now I do remember, it was not !”

The lawyer shook his head : it seemed to him

That this was just a clever subterfuge ;

But Marie’s father answered from his place

Among the mighty burgesses of Bruges :

“Andrea, its absence is a point for thee

Strong in its bearing on the present doubt—

The doubt my friends here have, but I have not.”

The pris’ner bent his head in sign of thanks,

And then the Advocate resumed : “We hear

That part of yester morning thou wert seen

In Mynheer Van Mael’s hostelrie, the Fox ;

Is this correct ?” “I was there ! Would to God

I had not been ! for this could not have chanced.”

“Then next we will call Mynheer Van Mael’s name

That he may witness *when* thou wentest home.”

The worthy host was waiting in the court,

So he responded to his name at once,

And came, and testified with many bows
That "Mynheer Andrea left his house at noon,
Just as the belfry chimed ; he noted that
Because he heard it through the open door
As the two gentlemen were passing out."
"The two! who was the other?" "'Twas that
friend

Who dwells upon the Dyver ; he plays cards
Oft-times with Mynheer Andrea at my inn."
"He must be called, that we may question him."
Then Marie's father told how Henri came
To see them early, since he had to leave
Ere noon for Brussels ; and a man was sent
To stop and bring him straight ; who soon came
back

With news that Mynheer Henri was just gone
When he arrived ; but, knowing all the case,
His mother proffered evidence instead.
A shade of wonder past o'er Andrea's face,
That while he stood on trial for his life
His dearest friend would not delay one hour,
Nor seek to speak a word on his behalf ;
And then he bowed his head within his hands ;—
What did aught matter now that she was gone ?
But the kind father, with his own deep grief
So nobly set aside, that he might help

Another, more afflicted than himself,
Felt the slight for him ; and his nod was curt
When Vrouw Van Ekker entered the great hall,
And when her name was called would fain begin
With words of woe at seeing her two friends
In such affliction. " Spare us that, good Vrouw !
We must be hard within this hall of law.
Our friend the Advocate desires to ask
How near to noon thy son came yestern home
From playing cards with Andrea at the Fox ?
And for the sake of the accused we pray
Thou wilt give heed, and seek to be exact."
But Vrouw Van Ekker answered quick and clear,
" It was not longer than five minutes' space
Since I had heard the belfry, when he came."

There was dread silence in the hall at this.
All felt the doubt grow darker at her words.
Van Mael had sworn they left his inn at noon.
Andrea looked sadly up, too stunned to see
The links the law was forging, one by one,
To chain him to the crime which wrought his woe.
Then spake the burgess who first made the charge :
" Andrea, the two last witnesses agree, and prove
Thou left'st the Fox at twelve ; how was it then
That when we found thee by thy murdered wife

Full twenty minutes had gone by, and yet
Thou dost pretend thou wert that moment come ?
How past the time between, if it were not
The space in which the fatal quarrel sped ?”
Andrea arose, the weary worried look
Was crost an instant by a flash of fire—
“ There was no quarrel ! on my oath to God !
Nor all thy wordy law can prove there was !
I turned from Van Mael’s inn, by Notre Dame,
Into the lane behind, to seek a man,
A cunning carpenter, to set fine wood
Above the fireplace in our hall, that there
I might carve Marie a brave mantelpiece.
The man was forth, I only saw a child,
Seeming half simple ; and then home I went.”
“ Good ! we will send to fetch the child at once ;
The law allows all theories till the proof.”
Another pause, while one went out to seek
That carpenter, and fetch the foolish child.
And Vrouw Van Ekker, who was ever kind
Where kindness could not cause her any loss,
Turning to Andrea with her sweetest smile,
Told him her Henri’s latest word had been
Of loving sympathy in his distress,
And he had begged that she would send a post
Directly on the ending of the case.

Just at that moment Andrea's mind went back
To Henri leaving him in haste at cards
To take her message, and a strange wild thought
Just flashed athwart his brain, and made him ask :
" When Henri left me waiting at the inn
Some half an hour before we both went home,
Was it to thee he ran, or other where ?"
But Vrouw Van Ekker answered glibly, " Troth !
He came to me, he told thee why he came."

[Yet this was false ! She had not seen her son
Till he and Andrea parted, after twelve ;
When he informed her of a quick resolve
To do what she had oft besought in vain—
To leave his idle life in Bruges, and work
In Brussels with his uncle, at the law.
Then asked for horses for himself and man,
That he might start " while yet his will was good."
And she had answered, " by the morrow all
Should be in readiness for him to go."
One hour, and then the news of Marie's death
Had reached them ! Yet he went not with the
crowd,
And fain had kept her from it ; but she ran,
Eager to see, and not so overcome
With horror at the tale as was her son.

But when they parted his last words had been
A warning—"Mother, every man in Bruges
Is open to suspicion of this deed ;
My danger is the greatest, as I went
So often there. Now, if they call for thee
To question of my movements yesterday—
So !—softly—I *left* Andrea at the cards
And said I came to thee, ere our last game !
Hush ! I will tell thee all another time ;
But *swear I came to thee*, and that a post
Had come from Brussels at that very time.
Swear ! for my guiltless life is in thy hand !
Farewell !"—and hardly had his horse's hoofs,
Or his strange words ceased ringing in her ears,
Ere came the message from the Council Hall.]

Poor Andrea felt a pang of self-reproach,
Hearing her ready answer ; could he doubt
Henri, in truth of either deed or word ?
And now the child for whom the lawyer sent
Was led into the hall, and set beside
The centre table, where he stood and stared
In stupid wonder at the novel scene.
The Advocate then asked if he could show
A person there whom he had lately seen ?
But when at length he seemed to understand

He turned and slowly pointed to the man
Who then had fetched him from his father's shop.
Andrea arose. "My child, dost thou know *me*?"
Some moments gazed the boy with open mouth
Or ere he, very slowly, shook his head.
Among the burgesses there passed a look.
The lawyer pressed the question—"Come, now
think !

Hast thou not seen that gentleman before?"
Alas ! the half-wit only shook his head !
Once more they tried, but with the same result,
Then let him go ; and having asked, for form,
If other witnesses had aught to tell ?
The Advocate gave orders to remove
The prisoner, that his judges might confer.
And soon as none but burgesses were left
Within the hall, began their business grave.

The truth brake bitterly on Marie's sire
Ere many minutes past ; of all the men
Sitting in judgment on his daughter's death,
None held her husband guiltless, save himself !
The old man shuddered as he heard them speak,
One after one, for well he knew the fate
Then meted to all murderers in Bruges.
He knew that if found guilty *death by fire*

Awaited one whom he had grown to love
E'en as the son he lost long years before !
And Marie's easy end seemed not so sad
As that most awful tragedy to come.
He lifted up his heart in prayer, and rose
In turn, and spoke such words of faith as shook
The doubting ones, but hardened all the rest,
Who deemed him partly in his dotage now,
Or shielding Andrea for his credit's sake.
Long waged the war of words ; but when the votes
At last were taken, only three were found,
Besides his own, to favour the accused !
The milder Justice of the day before
Was one of these ; he could not quite forget
He had known Andrea all his blameless youth.
But these few votes were not enough to prove
His innocence, nor stop the course of law.
And soon the Advocate arose and read
The legal notice, that they had agreed
To hold the prisoner guilty, saving four.
Then, with all haste, to stop a last appeal
From Marie's father, the accused was called,
And all the crowd came back into the court.
Once more the bell was rung, and silence fell
Ere echoed through the hall the words of doom,
Sentencing Andrea, since the Council found

Him guilty of the murder of his wife,
To suffer death by roasting at a fire !

A thrill of horror ran through all who heard,
And some who held him guiltless shouted "Shame!"
Andrea turned white—a moment nature shrank
From thought of torture to the tender flesh ;
Then solemnly he raised his hands on high—
" I do declare, in presence of that God
To Whose tribunal I shall pass from yours,
That He shall find *me* innocent of blood !
Look to yourselves, O burgesses of Bruges !"

Two hours had passed away, two awful hours,
While kindled and blazed high the fatal fire ;
Not in the Market Place, but (from respect
To Marie's sire in private all should be)
Within the gloomy Palace of the Franks.
With him, and his confessor, Andrea sate
In converse high, seeking a martyr's strength,
Until the Captain of the Guard arrived
With men-at-arms to lead him to his doom.

A large bare chamber, with three windows tall,
Yet placed so high that nought could be beheld
Beyond them, save the sky ; the doors set wide,

And, not in the sheer centre of a wall,
But nearer to the windows, blazed the fire—
A fearful fire within the chimney wide !
A strong stake fastened to the oaken floor
Showed where the victim would be bound in front.
The father made a sign to stop the men
From going straightway to their ghastly work,
And to the Council made a last appeal.
They trembled, and some wavered ; but their pride
Forbade them to revoke their cruel word.
“ ’Tis sad, ’tis painful ! but it is the law.
We do adjudge him guilty, so proceed ! ”
But as they bound him to the fatal stake,
And Andrea raised his eyes in prayer above,
A thought was sent in answer, and he spake :

“ Here, on the brink of death, I do protest
That ye condemn me innocent to die !
To die a death of agony for nought !
Ye speak of justice to the holy dead ;
Beware ! lest her pure spirit at the Throne
Appeal for judgment on the town of Bruges !
Have mercy while ye may, and hearken now :
Grant me a respite while I carve a thing
Such as but yestern I designed for her—
A mantelpiece in mem’ry of this day,

Set up above this hearth on which I stand
And feel the fire scorch as the flames of hell,
Which shall envelop all who are unjust !
God and Marie have mercy ! Turn their hearts !"

The dead wife's father bent his aged knees
Beside the victim, and the priest stood out,
Holding the Rood aloft—

" By Him who died
In agony on this for all our sins
I charge ye, pause ! In Christ my Master's name
I do declare the innocence of him
Whom I have shriven ! Justices of Bruges !
Beware ! and bring not blood upon your souls !"

Then looked upon each other those stern men,
And three came out, and stood by Andrea close
(Those three who voted for him in the Hall).
One flung his cloak to shield the victim's face.
" No man withstanding, we would loose his chains !"
Outspake another ; and swift answer came—
" Unbind the prisoner ! we would not be wrong !"

Then burgesses, and not the men-at-arms,
Tore off in haste the chains, already hot :
And, drawn away, fell Andrea on his knees

And kissed the crucifix his priest held out,
And offered thanks to GOD for this His grace.
But Marie's father claspt him to his breast
And wept, losing at last the self-command
He had sustained throughout the cruel day.
So for a space no man had heart to speak.
At length a stern old Justice gathered voice :

"Andrea, strong pressure has been brought to bear
Upon thy judges ; truly GOD He knows
Not one of us but strives to judge aright.
And yet men's judgment is not always true.
Still we must tell thee, though we spare thy life,
For thy strong protestation, and the faith
Of thy wife's father, and this holy monk,
Our own conviction is the same as erst ;
So till Vrouw Marie's murderer is found
We hold thee prisoner as the one accused."
But Andrea answered : " Ye have spared my life,
I bless you for your mercy. Let me now
Work in my prison as I have proposed,
And I will make so marvellous a thing,
E'en in this gloomy chamber where we stand,
As shall endure as long as Bruges shall last ;
A monument of mercy unto you,
A symbol of my sorrow ever more !

Firm is my faith in GOD! I do not doubt
That He who hath preserved me from the fire
Will prove my innocence in His good time,
And find the fiend who wrought the cruel wrong.
I have been thoughtless in my happy youth,
But now I bow beneath His chastening Hand."

A.D. 1509.

Again that gloomy room, with windows three,
But near them what a miracle of Art!
Above the fireplace wide where Andrea stood
Doomed to destruction, thirty years ago,
There dwells a little world of wondrous forms
Carved by his cunning hand, day after day,
Year after year; as, fed on prisoner's fare,
And watched continually by men-at-arms,
He wrought the mighty monument of woe,
And peopled it with splendid kings and queens,
And left his murdered Marie's lovely face
To last for ever in her native land.

And there, too, Andrea stands; but ah! how
changed!
The stalwart form is shrunken to a shade,

The blue eyes laugh no more, but slow and sad
Follow and guide the chisel at its work ;
The chestnut hair is faded, yet not grey,
Still in thin curls above the broad, lined brow.
That feeble figure, and that pale worn face
Are not the signs of five-and-fifty years,
But depths of woe not measured out by time.
Marie's kind father long ago has gone
To join his darling in the better land,
Loving and trusting Andrea to the last,
Although his ceaseless efforts failed to find
A clue to the dark myst'ry of her death.
And still the artist at his endless work
Lives on in faith that GOD will clear his name
Before he enters into life and rest.
Nor always sad is he, but sometimes sings
Some lay of youth, or his own thoughts in rhyme.
And this May morning, while the chisel chips,
He trills a lyric to his long-lost bride.

ANDREA'S SONG.

Thirty long years, Marie ! Marie !
Thirty long years to-day have sped,
Since that bright morn so long ago
When all my joy was turned to woe,
When home I came and found thee dead !

To-day is bright, Marie ! Marie !
And something of my youth comes back,
The sense of sunshine in those days
O'er which the light of memory plays,
When I had all that now I lack.

And yet not all, my saint Marie !
For I have bought the Pearl of Price
With all that earth could give me here,
Rest, liberty, and thou, most dear ;
And can the payment yet suffice ?

When at the Gate, my bride Marie !
Thy white-robed soul shall welcome mine,
And lead me to the Saviour's feet,
Whose sufferings made mine complete,
Shall I at life's lost years repine ?

Ah, no ! for then, my lost Marie !
Thou wilt be mine for evermore,
And ne'er dark fate nor weapon keen
Can part us in that land, I ween,
Where all things live but to adore !

I thought to carve for thee, Marie !
A lasting memory in wood,
That should adorn thy dwelling-place
And keep in mind thy lovely face
As long as stately Brugës stood.

My work is well-nigh done, Marie !
Yet not within our own fair hall.
Man's erring judgment did its part,
GOD'S fires have purified my heart !
And I can trust Him now for all.

And on this sweet May morn, Marie !
I feel a sense of coming bliss,
Which whispers weary work is o'er,
That soon from captive toil I soar,
To seek thy spirit's soothing kiss.

So Andrea sung ; and shadowed in his song
The silent warning sweeping through his soul.
Nor knew how that same noontide at the Fox
(The selfsame inn where thirty years before
He spent the last gay morning of his life)
A sick man, who had come the previous night
With many servants, and all signs of wealth
Off a long journey, to the famous inn,
Drew near his end ; and sent to seek a priest
To speed his soul in safety to that bourne
From whence no traveller may make return.
And Mynheer Van Mael, the all-courteous son
Of that all-courteous host of long ago,
Went up meanwhile to see how fared his guest.
And the sick man made signs that he should sit.

Then feebly murmured of the days long gone,
When he remembered Van Mael in his youth.
Next, questioned if he knew him? But mine host,
Whose creed was never to forget a guest,
Howe'er remote the trav'ller's stay might be,
Was fain to bow, and rub his hands, and "deem
That illness must have changed his patron's face,
Yet soon he should recall it, surely soon!"
"Nay! Mynheer Van Mael; I was not thy guest,
But thy good father's, many days and oft
When time hung all too heavy on my hands;
I found it pass more gaily at the Fox,
With youthful comrades, over painted cards."

The sick man paused, and slightly shuddered here;
Then, turning his dark eyes to Van Mael's face—
"Henri Van Ekker—dost thou know me now?"
"Know thee, Mynheer! in sooth! But ah! how
changed—
Yet pardon me! it is so long ago!
I was a stripling then, and stood full oft
To watch those games; when, if thou chanced to
play
With Mynheer Andrea (the saints pity him!),
I would revolve within my boyish mind
Which were the nobler, finer gentleman."

“ And he, poor Andrea, still he lives and toils ?”

“ Alas ! Mynheer, that wretch was never found

Who slew Vrouw Marie, so his work goes on.

Yet my good father never would believe,

Nor yet can I, that he had aught of guilt.”

A servant entered—

“ Sirs, the holy man !”

And Van Mael, rising, bowed himself away,

While the priest took his seat beside the bed.

But Henri glanced with fear at his stern face,

E'en while he gave the greeting of the Church.

For this confessor was a man austere,

Devout, cramped by a hard and narrow faith,

Which made him echo in his daily life

Rather the Pharisees' unbending law

Than that of Christ the Lord, Whose yoke was light.

Stern penances he gave, nor his own sins

Passed over unchastised. In early youth,

Before the chilling convent froze his heart,

He had been Andrea's friend ; and still sometimes

Would softly enter that most gloomy room

Where the sad prisoner silently did toil,

To speak a word of comfort in his ear,

Borrowed from Holy Writ ; for he believed

That Andrea's innocence must yet be proved.

Van Ekker felt that time for him was short,
And though this was no sleek and easy monk
To use soft words and cover every sin
With golden angels for his convent's use,
Still he must free his conscience from a crime
Hidden too long, and get it blotted out
Before he went to his account above,
Lest Purgat'ry for him should turn to Hell.

First came the leech to give a cordial strong,
And raise his patient's head for easier speech,
Then left the soul's physician to his work.
The sick man's breath came shorter, half with fear,
Half with approaching death ; and this the priest
Observing, hastened to direct that first
He should confess whatever deadly sins
Were marked upon the tablet of his life,
And only after these were wiped away
(Should time be granted) faults of less degree.

"Ah ! holy father, let me now bespeak
The Church's utmost clemency of thee !
I have a tale to tell I have not dared
Breathe into mortal ear. Nigh half my life
It has lain hidden in the shade asleep.
But now, before I stand in Heaven's light,
I would assoil it by thy kindly help.

And oh ! good father, bear it in thy mind
That I, confessing, make my best amends.
Not as the proud rich man shall I depart !
My tale when told to thee will leave my name
Branded in Brügge !—Thirty years to-day
I did the deed of which I now repent.
I had a friend named Andrea——” here the priest
Started and flushed, and then with eyes downcast
Bent lower, that he might not lose a word—
“ Who on that dreadful day of which I speak
Had been united near about two months
With one whom I had hoped to call my own.”

Again on Henri flashed the stern grey eyes
Of the confessor, for a moment’s space.—
“ Father thou art a priest, but yet a man ;
Consider my temptation, and my grief!—
We met in Brussels, where her father dwelt
All her bright girlhood ; thither I was sent
To study law. Alas ! I studied love !
And there long time I wooed her, but in vain.
’Twas all in secret, for I knew her sire
(Who bore an ancient grudge against my house)
Would bar his door if he should read my heart.
So when fair Marie bade me hope no more,
I prayed that she would tell no living man

That I had sought her love ; for so I thought,
Her father still unknowing, I might chance
Another day to win a softer word.
For half I doubted if she loved me not.

Then they returned to Bruges ; my evil fate
Bound me to Brussels till the year was out.
But at the Christ-tide home I went, and found
My friends rejoicing in their native town,
The father made a burgess, and the girl
More beautiful than ever ; full of joy
To see the old man 'mid his ancient friends
So honoured and so welcome in fair Bruges.
He and my widowed mother, foes at heart,
Had yet made outward peace, so I was free
To hang about their home as I was wont.
And then I found the closest friend I had,
Andrea, the comrade of my boyish days,
Had caught the old man's fancy, by his grace,
His sunny beauty and his joyous air.
And Marie told me he was like the son
Her father lost while she was yet a child—
' My kind half-brother '— and I heard a sigh.
Andrea, who had no parents of his own,
Was glad to hover round the Justice old
And share his daughter's smiles ; yet she was kind,

And still I doubted if she loved me not.”
The sick man paused exhausted, and the priest
Hastily held a cordial to his lips :
He drank it and revived, and soon resumed.

“ Then came a shock that shattered half my hope !
When the first snowdrops glistened on the ground,
(I love not flowers, but those since then I hate !)
Gay Andrea told me, as we paced along,
That he believed fair Marie’s heart was his !—
How of the father he had asked her hand,
Who granted it, ‘ so Marie gave her love ;’
And how he hoped to win her word that eve.
And then he turned, and held a hand to me—
‘ Old friend ! I love her in my deepest soul !’
I took his hand, a sort of nettle-plant
Which I must grasp, and mumbled what I might
Of gratulation, with my heart on fire !

“ His suit had all success, and many days
Past ere I saw Marie to speak alone.
‘ Is this thy wish ? Has Andrea won thy love ?’
I questioned sternly, and she made reply,
Maidenly mild : ‘ It was my father’s wish,
And I can bend me gladly to his will.’
A frank true word might then have saved us both ;
But now I doubted if she loved me not.

“ In March there came the marriage, and I stood
By Andrea in a sort of nightmare dream,
He knowing nothing of the past ; I bound
His bride to special secrecy with him,
‘ Lest it should mar our friendship, old and true !
Then oft I saw her in her husband’s house,
And loved her not the less, but ever, more !
And—since I must confess the truth to win
Whole absolution, I still dared to hope
That she would fly with me to some far land !
’Twas true that she was blithe as some bright bird
Through all those sweet spring days. But I was
mad !
For still I doubted if she loved me not.

“ And daily grew my hatred more intense
To him who robbed me of the Rose of Bruges,
Until at last I swore within my heart
That I would win her, or that she should die !
I could not bear the sight of Andrea’s joy.”
(The Priest sat motionless, to hear the whole,
Yet fiercely clenched his hands beneath his robe.)
“ I laid my plans : within their hall there hung
A jewell’d dagger Andrea seldom used ;
’Mid many weapons it would not be missed.
I took it down and hid it ’neath my cloak—

If other arguments should fail, then This !
With the blame falling on the name it bore.
And then I only waited time and chance
To offer Marie life with me, or death.
These, ere two days were over, both I found.
For meeting Andrea on a stroll one morn,
Singing a joyous stave anent his love,
I drew him to this inn to play at cards,
And set a secret stake, that if I won
It was a sign to seek Marie at once.
The game was mine ! So bidding Andrea wait,
I left him there, and in a space returned.

“ But in that space ? Father, assoil me now !
Marie, as oft-times, opened the yard door
Herself, and here was just the chance I sought !
With sweet words I began, and told her how
The love of years grew greater and not less—
And she reproved me gently, ‘ she had hoped
I held her as a friend apart from love.
This was not fitting—she was Andrea’s wife.’
“ Yea, so ! most by thy father’s will, I wot !
Andrea’s light nature cannot love like mine.
We do him no great wrong. Sweet ! fly with me
And thou shalt find the older love the best.’
She stabbed me with her eyes—‘ And thou his friend

More than a brother, I have heard him say !
“ He came between us twain, and won thy sire
First, with the flatteries that old men love ;
He was more crafty than myself : he knew
His interest ! I but thought of thee !—
Now listen, Marie ! Promise to be mine
And this mad marriage shall be swept away,
And all be bliss ! But if thou still refuse,
Beware ! Thou shalt not *live* as Andrea’s bride !
Marie’s gray eyes flasht fire : ‘ Away ! I scorn
Thy coward threat as thy unholy love !
And since no thought of honour checks thee
know
That I love Andrea as I love my soul !
“ Then die ! ’——

“ I plunged his dagger in her heart
And as she fell, with only one low cry,
I tore it out, and flung it down and fled.”
As his long tale went on, the sick man’s voice
Grew firmer with the strength excitement gives ;
Yet at the end he sank exhausted back—
“ Father, absolve me quickly, ere I die ! ”

But still the grim confessor spake no word ;
For in his frosty breast, so long unmoved,
The Man rose up and overcame the Priest !

A moment's deadly silence ; then the storm
Of righteous human wrath broke out and raged
Above the dying, cow'ring criminal,
As, springing to his feet, with flashing eyes,
He thundered forth—

“Son of the Evil One !

Villain ! and wretch !—I cannot find fit words—
I, used to tales of every sort of crime ;
I, that for thirty years have heard of sins,
Until I deemed I knew all that are wrought
In this dark world !—I cannot find a word
With which to name thy cruel crime. ‘Absolve !’
Father above ! can I, or any priest,
Bearing Thy mercy to the penitent,
Presume to stretch its grace to such as This ?—
One who could first destroy with ruthless hand
A fair and faithful daughter of the Church,
And then allow the man he had bereaved
To suffer in his stead ! death, or a fate
Far worse than death, the slowest martyrdom
On record in the world ! Thirty long years
Of weary toil without the artist's meed
Of praise, save when the splendour of his work
Surprised a word or two from men who deem
E'en to this day, that his God-gifted hand
Could strike the gentle heart which loved him well :

Thirty long years of woes beyond all words,
Borne with a noble patience which hath preached
Christ's gospel every day to those around.
While *thou* hast lived in luxury and ease,
Thy searèd conscience giving thee no pain,
Howbeit doubtless thou didst often hear
The fame of that fine Mantelpiece at Bruges,
On which a weary wight had worked for years.
And knew, in thy black heart, that sculptor sad
Was wearing out his life in dark disgrace
Among his fellow-men for thy foul crime !
And yet no thought of boyhood's happy hours,
When Andrea had been all a brother might,
Could move thee to a care to right the wrong !
Heav'n were not Paradise if such as thou
Could crawl, like reptiles, through the Pearly Gate.
Nay ! ask not absolution ! Only fear
Can move to right in such a serpent's soul !
I was a Man, before I was a Priest,
And man was made God's image, and Christ died
That man might rise to what he once had been,
By seeing and by loving Christ's pure life.
But when a soul for whom He died rejects
His grace, and turns aside to do dark deeds,
Careless of pardon till the parting hour,
It is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

To such no priest of God hath power to say—
‘ Rejoice ! Thy God forgives, thou shalt not die ! ’ ”

Then came a gasp, an awful rattling sound,
And on the pillow Henri’s head fell back,
A stare of terror in the eyes ; but ere
The priest’s loud call could bring the waiting leech,
That crime-stained soul went forth to face its fate.

The grave physician came, and closed the eyes ;
And lifting high his crucifix, the Priest—
“ In manus tuas, Domine ! ”—no more.
Then turning to the leech : “ Before us lies
The man who slew Marie, poor Andrea’s bride !
Do thou tell Van Mael, spread the news abroad !
While I go straight to set the prisoner free.”

And waiting not for words with any man,
Went the confessor to the Council Hall,
Where sat the burgesses to hear a cause ;
Which ending as he entered, he stood forth
And told them all the tale of the past hour,
Amid a breathless silence, save some sounds
Of horror and regret from those who heard.
And when it closed an ancient Justice rose :

‘ May God forgive our fathers, or ourselves,

All who had part in this most cruel wrong !
I, woe is me ! and some my compeers, sate
On that dread day, just thirty years ago.
Yet most are gone ; for them be masses said,
To pray the saints for succour to their souls !
Meanwhile, my friends, to set our martyr free !
Truly I wonder not that through these years
God's wrath has ever seemed to hang o'er Bruges,
While naught has thriven in our guilty town !
Come, holy father !" Then with one consent
The Council went to Andrea at his work,
From some vague feeling that it were not fit
To have him fetched to stand before them there.

'Twas not an hour since he had ceased his song,
And still his mind was dwelling on the past ;
That sweet, sweet spring, such weary years ago !
Before the murder like a chasm cleft
A bridgeless gulf between his sunny youth
And all the dark hereafter of his life.
And then it turned to Henri, his dear friend
Who died so early, far away in France !
But sent a message with his latest breath
To bid him hope, for surely must be found,
Ere long, the man whose crime had wrought his
 woe.

Just then the sound of many hasty feet
Roused Andrea from his reverie ; they came
Close to the door on his right hand !—a pause—
And while the watching soldier stood to arms
With thought of public riot, raised to free
All pris'ners of the State, that door flew wide,
And there stood all the burgesses of Bruges !
They entered singly, doffing their square caps
To Andrea, as a token of respect ;
Who stood aghast, the chisel in his hand,
Waiting to wit the cause of this strange scene.
Was it release ? his work was well-nigh done—
Yet why among them came his friend the Priest ?
So half in hope and half in fear he stood.
When all were in, the oldest burgess spake :

“ Andrea, we come to bring thee joyful news !
Come all together, since we crave a boon—
Pardon ! for us who did condemn thee once,
Pardon ! for us who still have kept thee here !—
Truth will to light at last ! This holy man,
Long time thy friend, and not so blind as we,
Has just confessed the slayer of thy wife,
Who, dying, has escaped the death by fire.”

The chisel from the carver's fingers fell,

He reeled, and prest one hand upon his heart,
Then whispered hoarse—

“Who did it? say the name!”

“Henri Van Ekker! who played cards that day.
May God forgive our error! Thou art free!”

Free in good sooth! Free from the yoke of toil,
Free from the burden of his heavy grief,
Free from all errors of this darkling earth!—
In face of these, his judges, who once set
The stake and fire within that very hall,
In front of his great life-work, which had been
The solace and sole int'rest of long years,
And aye should stand, the monument of him
Condemned to die before a mantelpiece
And of the power of fire, guiltless of crime,—
The artist's worn-out frame fell to the ground!
Too weak to bear the sudden shock of joy,
The wonder of release! While Henri's guilt
Snapt the last chord of life's frail trembling harp!

A cry of grief from all the Council rose.
And softly falling on his knees, the Priest
Held high the Cross, and raised the dying head.
But that grand soul, so gifted by his God,
So long afflicted by his fellow-man,

Sped swiftly up towards the Shining Gate.
And purified by Purgatory here,
(Yet saved alone through Him who died and rose)
Past glorified into the blessed rest
Of Martyrs dwelling by the Crystal Sea.

TRANSLATIONS.

THE EXISTENCE OF A LEAF.

From the German of Rückert.

O HOW sweet is of a leaf the lifetime ;
Soft Spring winds
Have rocked it lightly.
'Neath smiling sunny skies so blue,
Sweetly fed with heavenly dew,
Never from its native land
Hurled away to distant strand,
Thus its summer-time it keeps.
Now it sweeps
Dead, yet softly beaming,
With a pale light gleaming,
While the wild winds mournful rave
Borne by Autumn to its grave.

A SONG OF THE OAK.

From the German of R. Löwenstein.

A STORM has been my greatest foe ;
Aye, since my days of childhood,
It ever sought to work me woe,
And thought to strike me earthward ;
But still, as greater danger grew,
More firmly I'd my vow renew :
 "I'll stand against the tempest !"

When others to the wind in fear
Bow themselves low and tremble,
I look on him and hold him here
Between my mighty branches.
Weak neighbour-trees who round me dwell
In German style protect I well :
 I stand against the tempest !

When fierce and cruel comes his grasp
Among my valiant branches,
My roots the earth more firmly clasp
And I stand strong and fearless.
I grew in German ground so free,
I know I am a German tree ;
I stand against the tempest !

THE ROSE'S MISSION.

From the German.

To Alexis send I thee ;
He, my rose, will tend thee kindly,
Smile thou on him sweet and friendly,
Let him dream he seeth me.

Fresh, a bud begun to blow,
Send I thee ! his lips will press thee,
Then, while thus he doth caress thee,
He will all thy message know.

Softly, as a kiss, thou'lt say,
With thy lips just half unclosing,
Where, in noontide's heat reposing,
He must think of me to-day.

SAYINGS.

From the German of Novalis.

I

WHAT suits, must be adapted ;
What understands, be comprehended ;
What is good, will be blended ;
What loves, together be.
What hinders, must give way ;
What is crooked straight must lay ;
What is far off, end its stay ;
What buds, must blossom be.

II

Give me faithfully thine hand ;
Be a brother to me, and
Thy true glance, until thine end,
Turn not again from me !

One temple where we bow,
One place to which we go,
One bliss, for that we glow !
One Heaven for thee and me !

ON THE SHORE.

From the German of Anastatius Grün.

ON heaped up bales of goods doth tend
The merchant rich so gladly ;
A fisher poor just now doth mend
His tattered nets most sadly.

Here oft pass strong and gay-deckt ships,
Whilst rotten wrecks lie in the sand ;
The haven here, and there the reefs ;
Flood and ebb, upon the strand.

Here bright sun, but storm clouds there;
Here silence, and there singing,
Returnings here, and partings there
Sails furled, and outward flinging.

Two maidens sit on the sea strand,
One weeping o'er the ocean ;
The other, garlands in her hand,
Throws roses 'mid its motion.

One, gloomy Sorrow's woeful child,
Groans out, with secret tremble :
" O sea ! O sea ! so sad and wild,
How dost thou life resemble !"

The other, image of bright joy,
Cries from her happy heart now :
" O sea ! O sea ! so light and mild,
Of life true image art thou !"

Forth roared the sea, and sounded o'er
The gladness, as the groaning ;
Forth roared the sea, and ah ! it bore
Away both tears and roses !

TO THE BARD.

From the German of Rückert.

WHEN within the human spirit
Thou wouldst play on ev'ry chord,
Tune not thou the note of sorrow
Till its sound with joy accord.

Many a one exists, who never
Feels delight, however brief,
And none lives but guardeth silent
In his breast a secret grief.

SONNETS.

IN MEMORIAM. CANON KINGSLEY.

January 23, 1875.

PAST from our midst, gone almost in his prime.

Out of the dawning brightness of the year !

Out of the tumult of a restless time,

Into the shadows of that Valley drear.

Gone ! leaving us on earth alone, to climb

Up to the cloud-wrapt future. How his ear

Heard its far mountain voices thrill and chime,

Falling through mists in echoes faint yet clear !

“Onward and upward !” was his battle-cry :

Seeking to raise men’s bodies with their souls,

Nobly this knightly priest of God did try

Heaven’s light to spread. And though all Eng-
land tolls

As a great bell his death, he will not die,

Fadeless his name on ever-living scrolls !

SNOWDROPS.

YE rise, oh earliest heralds of the Spring !
From your dark graves beneath the snow untrod,
And news of the bright resurrection bring
Of flow'rets resting in the ice-bound sod.
Like souls in glistening garments do ye rise,
From all the dark earth's soils and stains made
pure,
And downward gaze in pity, spirit-wise,
Ere ye this world for ever more abjure.
Too soon ye leave us, going hence to seek
The dim and distant cloud-enveloped shore
Which surely is your country, blossoms meek !
Where, drooping 'neath strong wintry storms no
more,
We shall behold you in your deathless state
Wreathing the portals of the Golden Gate !

LILIES.

WHITE bells, your soft aërial peals are heard
Floating upon the summer breeze, by ears
Of some, on whom the gift is still conferred
To hear the hidden music of the years.
Sprites, most minute, by them are seen to glide
Around your slender stalks, to shake the peal
Into harmonious motion, and abide
Resting below, or up the broad leaves steal.
And o'er the mountain side your scent is borne
By warm soft airs of heaven, which blow it in
Here at my open casement ; when, if worn
And tired in mind, with study, or the din
Of cares, and thoughts whose echoes shake the soul,
It comes like balm, and makes the wounded spirit
whole.

PANSIES.

RICH-BLOOMING Pansies ! oh ! what subtle thought
Works in a Poet's mind, if he behold,
Your tender petals, with bright purple wrought
In shades blent softly to a crown of gold.
For ye are emblems of a peaceful mind
That rich in its own loveliness lives on
Through shower and storm, and sinks not in the
blind
Impatience of a world which seeks to con,
With small dim eyes, the motives of the acts
Of Him who made it ; but like ye, sweet flow'rs,
Brighter and fresher for the passing rain, extracts
Some blessed comfort from its darkest hours.
Bloom on, fair representatives of ease of heart,
And in the golden Autumn peacefully depart.

WHITBY ABBEY.

I STOOD at sainted Hilda's sacred shrine,
Amid the ruinous relics of the past,
While the near lowing of the browsing kine
Came borne upon the fresh autumnal blast.
The self-same dome of sun-filled azure air
Above the ruins, as beheld of yore
By Oswy's daughter, as she knelt in prayer,
Or stood alone, to silently adore
The great Primeval Artist, who had wrought
Such glorious works of sea, and cliff, and sky ;
The stately pile twelve centuries have brought
To utter ruin ; but His work stands high
Above all change, strong as in farthest time,
Sublimely resting in a golden prime.

THE FADED YEAR.

LOST to all colour, wrapt in her white shroud,
With the gay brightness of her youth forgot,
Low winds around, bewailing her sad lot,
In forest breaking into murmurs loud.
Worn out with age, the faded year lies cold
And dead, upon a couch of frozen snow,
Near the wide river which has ceased to flow,
Beyond the ramparts of the city old.
Hark! From the stately Minster tower there
tolls
A knell for her, and from the shadowed sky
Fall tears, transformed to flow'rets ere they lie
Upon her pall in starry glitt'ring scrolls.
Thick mists receive her in a tomb of frost,
And to all mortal ken the sad old year is lost.

York.

A DECEMBER SUNSET.

SEE the bright forms of angels glorified
Sustain the weight of the fast sinking sun
One moment ; but the next, behold it glide
From their embrace, falling through vapours dun
Into a sea of crimson ; all the blood
Of unknown martyrs to the pride of man
Is there collected, in a purpling flood,
Uplifted from the earth o'er which it ran,
And held aloft, the banner of God's wrath,
Confronting the rebellious hosts below,
Unfurl'd and waving o'er Destruction's path,
Splendid and sadd'ning in its ruby glow.
Behind a rampart-cloud the sun goes down,
And all the darken'd sky shows the Eternal's frown.

HEIDELBERG CASTLE.

RELIC of regal pomp once raised in vain !

Still standing haughty in thy broken pride
'Neath storm, or burning sun, or April rain,
High and unmoved, above the rushing tide.

Thee oft I saw, across the fairy stream

From woody mountain path, on summer day,
Wrapt in blue mist, a dim majestic dream,

As the bold hero of a deathless lay
Saw the enchanted Castle of St. John.

Thou vanished not, though sunshine streamed
around—

Loudly the silvern Neckar babbled on,

And so “the fabric of a dream” was found !
What mists, what memories of war and crime,
Wrap thee, amid the sunlight of our time !

POEMS.

UN TROUVÈRE.

A.D. 1350.

LONG ago in olden times,
In the sunny land of France,
In an age when minstrels' rhymes
Mingled with war-chargers' prance
Were the sounds of ev'ry day,
'Twas a Trouvère sang this lay :

“ I stand
In the land
Where my lady dwells so calm !
Ev'ry vineyard, tree, and hill,
All my heart doth move and thrill,
For each perchance
Has felt her glance
Fall upon it, soft as balm.

“ The rose
Fairer blows
Here, to please my lady's eye ;
Skylarks here more sweetly sing
When from dewy nests they spring,—
Ah ! poor Trouvère !
Who may not dare
With them in their art to vie.

“ Ah me !
It may be
She will not vouchsafe her ear
To her minstrel's voice and lyre ;
She who doth my strains inspire,
Stands so on high,
My humble sigh
She, perchance, may never hear !

“ Yet, no !
Ah ! not so !
Set the bitter thought aside !
May it never prove a truth !
Sure my lady's gentle ruth
Will grant one smile,
And thus beguile
Sorrow into joy and pride.

“ On ! on !

There, upon

Yonder hill her castle stands !

Higher yet my heart shall beat,

Kneeling at my lady's feet !

And, oh ! my lyre !

In notes of fire

Speak thou through thy master's hands !”

Thus he sang, the young Trouvère,

Passing through a Norman town ;

Speeding to the Lady fair

Who his knightly deeds could crown,

In an age when Beauty bright

Ruled with undisputed right.

Answer'd was his humble prayer,

Far above his wildest thought,

For, upon her bold Trouvère,

Who for her had sung and fought,

Well bestowed that Lady grand,

Crown, and heart, and gold and hand !

EVENING AT LLANDUDNO.

TWILIGHT and sunset mingle o'er the Head,
Whose edge is sharply cut against the sky ;
While westward, Conway Bay sleeps in a haze
Of blue, and grey, and amber ; and above,
Where the last touch of sunlight dies,
Smothered and stifled, in the azure arms
Of the fair August eve, twinkles a star ;
One silent lonely star, herald of Night,
Rich in a robe of Heaven's shining court.
Eastward are lighted windows, and the sea,
Beside whose waves parade, a worldly throng,
The votaries of Fashion's empty shrine.
This is the scene from which I turn to read,
Quickly and glad, the letter of a friend.

A SWEDISH LEGEND.

I.

ONE holiday, brimful of glee,
Two children left their father's hall,
Ran gaily o'er the sunny lea—
They heard the babbling river's call.
“Come play with me,” it seemed to say
To those fair lads in accents gay.

II.

But now, soft blending with its voice,
There rose the sound of music sweet,
A song whose burden was, “Rejoice !
Nor dream that joy can ever fleet.”
They gained the bank, and soon espied
Glad Necken on the other side.

III.

On the blue waves, beneath the shade
Of waving alder trees, he sat,
While water-lilies round him made
A pure and whitely dazzling mat.
His golden air streamed on the breeze ;
His harp poured joyous melodies.

IV.

Long time entranced the children stood ;
At last impulsively they spoke :
“What profit, Necken, or what good
Shall be, that you should joy invoke,
In runes so sweet and notes so true ?
No happiness can come to you !”

V.

That speech with sorrow Necken heard ;
Reminded of his doom, aside
He cast his harp, without a word,
And sank far down beneath the tide.
Through bright waves to a brighter spot,
Where stands his pearl-deckt coral grot.

VI.

At eve, as fledglings to the nest
Their homeward way the children took,
And told their father how, at rest,
They saw fair Necken in the nook
Of alders ; of his thoughtless lay,
In what despair he sank away.

VII.

The sire rebuked their careless haste,
And told them they were in the wrong.
“ Lo ! Necken, too, shall one day taste
The joy he spake of in his song—
For ne’er is happiness denied
To one who seeks it,” he replied.

VIII.

When spirits, who in mid-air wait
To bid the sinking sun adieu,
Next cast round earth a robe of state
Composed of clear and pearly dew,
With graver pace the brothers took
Their way towards the babbling brook.

IX.

Alas ! no sound of music sweet
Came wafted to those longing ears,
But in his alder-shaded seat
Sad Necken sate dissolved in tears.
His golden hair dishevelled hung,
His silver harp lay all unstrung.

X.

So, standing in the sun's last rays,
The boys cried out, to cheer his mind :
“ O ! weep not, Necken ! father says
That you will also one day find
A refuge sure from all distress,
A deep and lasting happiness.”

XI.

Then Necken wept no more ; but took
His harp again, and poured afar
Enchanting strains, at which the brook
Paused, that its murm'ring might not mar
One cadence or one rune, that flowed
Till morn in rosy chaplets glowed.

TO LISA, ON HER BIRTHDAY.

THE promise and the sweetness of the May
Has spread and warmed and blossomed into
June,
And with the growing of the waxing moon
Has lengthen'd out the genial summer day.

And in the early summer of thy life,
Upon the enchanted meadow-land of youth,
Thou standest, culling fairy flowers of truth
To blossom and refresh thee in the strife.

Fair glades and avenues appear to lead
Across the mystic country, to those hills
Which stand far off in Dreamland, where the
rills
Of hope run sparkling o'er the velvet mead.

The scene is glamour, and will fade like mist
From off the mountains, as the sun gets high.
For Hope is false ; yet still shall Faith be nigh,
And with her Joy, though Hope no more exist.

A DAY-DREAM.

O DREAMY fountain splashing !
O garden green and wild !
O shady sunny Springtide !
O breezes soft and mild !
O bonnie sunlit mountains !
O foaming restless stream !
O clouds that fleck the ether !
O silent shapeless dream !

Whence comes this mystic feeling,
This thrilling strange delight !
Through all my senses stealing
With overpowering might ?
O distant rolling surges !
O Island far away !
My dream in mem'ry merges
As dawning blends with day.

EVENING.

SWEET Eve, I hail thee ! come at last
With spirit-healing calm !
Thy cloak of dew around me cast,
Thy fingers dropping balm.

Thoughts of the absent thou dost bring,
But only of the loved ;
Thy sacred lyre's one silver string
Hath ne'er to hatred moved.

What is the charm, oh silent Queen !
That such sweet peace imparts ?
Where doth the magnet dwell unseen
Which draws to thee our hearts ?

IN DER FREMDE.

I.

THE strong winds wrestle with the trees
All up the mountain side ;
I lose all thought of the inland breeze,
And it seems to me
The roar of the sea,
The voice of ocean wide !

II.

It seems the sound that stilled at first
The infant's fretful cry,
That calmed the young soul's fever-thirst—
That braced my heart
To a stronger part
Under an alien sky.

III.

In thought I see the slender mast
 Bend to the heavy gale ;
The delicate weeds by the sea upcast,
 And echoes of waves
 In Cambrian caves
 Murmur a mystic tale.

IV.

The bright sun floods these Dreamland shores
 With beams of summer past,
The glist'ning sea-gull sinks and soars,—
 I lift mine eyes,
 The vision flies—
 Life's glories fly as fast !

SEHNSUCHT.

MY soul is full of longing,
 Mine eyes are looking West,
Towards my native country,
 While sinks the sun to rest.
When shall I see that glory
 Glowing above the sea ?
When shall I reach the haven
 In which I fain would be ?

* * * * *

From out my German casement
 Mine eyes behold the moon ;
She shines above the mountain
 Bright as the sun at noon.
Dark clouds are all around her,
 Beyond, a clear blue sky ;
Will she reach that, I wonder ?
 And will the black clouds fly ?

THE BROOK OF LIFE.

O DAYS that babble over stones
Which pave the brook of life,
I know your low and ceaseless tones
A voice with meaning rife.
I feel ye rushing ever on,
And bearing me away ;
I look the backward view upon,
In vain, ye will not stay.
Sometimes your waters glisten clear,
With sunlight on each wave ;
Sometimes the sky is black with fear,
And hollow voices rave.
Then slow and dim your current creeps
Along its slimy bed,
And from the rugged stony steeps
Each sunny gleam is fled.

But, creep or rush, still on ye go,
And bear me on your breast ;
Till Time doth rescue me, and so
I enter into rest.

SEVEN A.M. AT WHITBY IN SEPTEMBER.

I.

MORNING shines o'er land and sea,
Silver river, cliff, and lea,
Yet the sea-fog doth not flee,
 Though the sun
Faintly gilds it with his beams,
Till the golden glory streams
Through it, and the pale mist gleams
 No more dun.

II.

Midst it all two forms appear,
Still and stately, and austere,
Dark, and sombre, and severe,
 On the cliff ;

At its very verge they stand,
Ancient church, and Abbey grand :
Down where wavelets kiss the land,
Rocks a skiff.

III.

By the sunbeams freed from mist
Is the little vessel kist,
Playing round it as they list.
Mimic waves
Tell not of the rough North Sea ;
Dreams of storm and shipwreck flee,
While around the *Sally Lee*
Soft it laves.

IV.

Stormy port of olden days !
Village quaint, of rugged ways !
Time a glamour on thee lays,
All thine own !
Sainted spirits throng around ;
In the Abbey's holy ground
Some of Hilda's snakes were found
Turned to stone.

V.

Legends wonderful are told
"Of the saintly days of old,"
Deeds of seamen wild and bold,
 Too, they tell.

I may never see thee more,
But remembrance of thy shore
Will remain till life is o'er,—
 Fare thee well!

MUSICAL MEMORIES.

YOU know not why I love it ;
You wonder I should ask
To have the strain repeated ;
You jest upon your task :

“ I play, and play for ever,
This one old opera air !
While you, contented never,
Sit listening in your chair.

“ I think of Milton’s ‘ Lady,’
You sit so very still !
Well, I am the enchanter,
And bind you at my will !”

But still you play it kindly,
You never say me nay,—
(Ah, friend ! how wondrous blindly
We go along our way !)—

You play it very finely ;
Then rise, with merry jest,
Unknowing of the mem'ries
Awaken'd in my breast.

You, who so truly love me,
Guess not those chords have power
To raise, by music's magic,
The ghost of one glad hour.

Ever while you are playing
My form sits tranced, 'tis true—
My spirit back goes straying
'Mid scenes you never knew !

AN OLD ENVELOPE.

LONG ago these words were written ;
In the misty vale of years
That fair day has paled and vanisht,
And my heart is full of tears.

Yet I have a sunny vision
Of a brilliant summer day,
Of a blue and cloudless ether,
And a joyous child at play.

How it comes that this poor trifle,
Speaking from that distant day,
Undestroyed still remaineth,
Know I not, it cannot say !

But I know it hath a magic
To recall bright days of yore,
Till I almost smell the woodbine
Waving at our cottage door.

And the free firm writing waketh
Thoughts which slumbered long ago,
Pushed aside amid the tumult
Of a life of care and woe.

Is the hand long cold that traced it?
Or, a worker among men,
With a steadfast, sobered spirit,
Lives the one who held the pen?

All is dim ;—perhaps hereafter
I shall meet that friend again,
And recall my happy childhood,
In the sunshine after rain.

IN THE FIRELIGHT.

THREE sat round a cheerful fire—

Three still forms with souls afar ;
One, who burnt with high desire,
One who watched the evening star,
One, whose fixt unerring gaze
Never left the merry blaze.

Voices had the soul of each,
Heard not by the other two ;
Words came none—what use in speech
Where no thought found echo true ?
Lone, each of that musing three,
As on desert plains were he.

High the dreams of one, I wot,
Soaring in the Future's sky ;
Work to do, fame to be got,
Bright the sunlit clouds sailed by !
Echoes floated down to him
From far glaciers high and dim.

Venus glistens in the sky ;
One within that antique hall
Gazes through the windows high,
While the shadows darker fall :
Bright the firelight, yet, above,
Brighter beams the light of Love.

Wide apart the two young souls,
Yet elate with hope was each ;
Eyes gazed on the glowing coals,
Speaking in their spirit-speech
Things of which the other twain
Knew not yet the weary pain.

So these spirits wandered free
Till the evening lamps were brought,
Rousing all the musers three
From the misty realms of thought.
Calmly spake then each to each,
Laught, and held light jesting speech.

Ever thus our lives do flow,
All unknown their subtle deeps ;
One in joy and one in woe,
Never one but silent keeps
Memory, or hope, or dream,
Hidden from the daylight's beam.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP.

“ YOU tell of two who never spoke !
And how could such be ‘ friends’ ?”
I answered, “ I do not revoke
The word which so offends.”

Yea ! “ friends.” Although they never spake,
Nor ever once clasped hands—
It is not outward signs which make
Two spirits’ inward bands.

A magnet influence drew them near
In public place or walk ;
And each these meetings held as dear
As others worded talk.

I cannot fathom deep enough
The myst’ries of the soul—
Our human guesses are but rough—
To comprehend the whole.

Yet so it was (as I have heard)
These two met day by day ;
Unbroken by an uttered word
The spell upon them lay.

Both strangers in a foreign land,
They knew a time must be
When one would linger on the strand,
And one sail o'er the sea.

And truly soon, one sought in vain,
Then went his lonely way,
To tropic lands ; and ne'er again
Their paths together lay.

But when each life was near its end,
It chanced that either told
To me (who proved a mutual friend)
This episode of old.

The days between their deaths were few ;
Perchance, though stunted here,
That friendship to perfection grew
In some eternal sphere.

A NOVEMBER MORNING.

OPEN I throw my casement !
And the glory of the hour
Lightens my lonely spirit
Where the clouds of night still lour.

Morning here shines in splendour
Over lofty mountain lands ;
Lo ! the green Angel's Meadow
Silent, calm and wide expands.

Westward, above the river,
Arches soft a rainbow high ;
Brighter than earthly gardens
Bloom the flow'r-beds of the sky.

Heidelberg.

CONWAY BAY.

OFTEN in the silent gloaming
Dream I that I still am roaming
Where the mimic waves do glisten
On the sands of Conway Bay.

Midst the noise of London, falling
Oft I hear their echoes calling ;
And I needs must pause and listen
To the sweet familiar lay,

Till the mountains seem around me ;
As when summer sunsets found me
Dreaming there of lands enchanted,
Doubting if the scene were true ;

While in flames the sun sank burning,
Clouds and sea to crimson turning,
O'er the waves its red light slanted
In among the mountains blue.

On the nearer hills lay blended
E'vry hue ; far off they ended
In a deep and dusky blueness,
 Melting into twilight gray.

On those sands I aye did linger
Till the Night with chilling finger
Dimmed the scene, but showed its trueness
 While she stole its tints away.

LILIES IN LONDON.

THE London streets are blazing
In the summer noon-tide heat ;
Along a dusty pavement
I haste on with weary feet.

O whence this sudden fragrance
That perfumes the summer air,
And wafts a breath from Eden
O'er the desert of despair ?

A basketful of lilies
Flashes white in pure sunbeams !
They gleam like angels' garments
In the glory of our dreams.

I pause ; their spell of sweetness
Can delay my hasty tread,
For mem'ries of departed
Happy days, ah ! long since dead !

Come with the scent familiar,
And amid this busy scene
The ghost stands sad beside me
Of a joy which might have been.

O lilies ! fresh as ever
Ye return, each rolling year,
And bloom in dewy whiteness
As the snow in winter drear.

The years have lost their freshness,
And alas ! no more can beam
The lilies of one summer
To enwreathe a sunny dream.

TO MY MOTHER.

SEATED here, in quaint old Brugès,
While the rain is falling, falling,
And the lofty trees are calling
 One to other, with the voices
Of the leaves this stormy weather
Rustles, as they cling together,
 Round the brown and mighty branches,

I bethink me of the verses
Due the day we cross the ocean ;
When amid the wild commotion
 Of that early morning journey
There will be no time for rhyming,
Nor to listen to the chiming
 Of the carillon of Brugès.

Yet those bells of mighty metal
Will chime sweetly on the morning
Of thy birthday, it adorning

With their strange and stately music.
This their message : " Blessing ! Blessing !
Health and peace and love possessing,
Joy be thine in every season."

October 13, 1885.

THE GERMAN EXILE BARD'S LAMENT.

PAST is all my happy dreaming
By the rushing river's side,
Past the hopes that once were gleaming
O'er the Neckar's silvern tide—
Past and gone
With summer's pride!

Dark and dreary is the prospect!
Blossoms gay, nor cooing dove,
Nought! to soothe my weary spirit
Till I gain sweet rest above—
In the land
Of peace and love!

Always carking care and sadness,
Trivial wants, and trivial woes,
Goading the worn soul to madness;
Scoffings from soft-smiling foes—
In this world
Is no repose!

Looking for a light that comes not,
Seeking to disperse the clouds,
Groping dimly in the darkness
While a mist my pathway shrouds—
All alone
Amid the crowds.

Ach ! alone !—yes ! oft I feel so,
Mid the rough and busy throng ;
Or when praises cold and absent
Meet my sunny bursts of song—
Hope is brief,
But life is long !

Lebewohl ! ach ! home of childhood !
Fatherland ! adieu for aye !
Never more beside the Neckar
Shall I in the sunshine stray,
Nor at eve
My zither play !

Land of dreams ! thy pearly portals
Gleam more faintly on my sight,
Fading in the glare of noontide,
Blending with the common light—
Shadow joys
Take hence their flight.

THE ROAMING SOULS.

WILD waves dashing with a weary motion
 (Far away from Albion's snowy cliffs),
Dream-boats drifting on a moonlit ocean,
 Ghostly figures standing in the skiffs.

Two fair forms amid the silence greeting,
 Sadly, sweetly, as two spirits may,
Knowing noontide ne'er could bring their meeting
 While those spirits still were wrapt in clay.

"Soul ! sweet soul ! ah ! whither art thou drifting,
 In thy dream-boat o'er this phantom sea ?
Round thy barque the mirrored moonbeams
 shifting
Seem a pathway leading me to thee !"

“Whither, friend ? O see'st thou not up-lifted,
Far away, the Standard of the Sky ?
When my dream-boat under that hath drifted,
Safe in harbour shall it ever lie.”

“'Tis the Cross ! on which mine eyes gaze nightly,
When the sun sets o'er this southern strand ;
If to-night it seem to shine more brightly,
'Twas to guide thee to my far-off land !

“Here is welcome, from long years of exile,
To the heart whose dreams are all of thee !
Stay thy barque, then, till the morning sun smile !
Drift no more upon a lonely sea !”

“Nay, dear Soul ! a dream can linger never !
Long ere morn my barque must fade away,
Leave thee lonely by these waters ever,
Till the sunlight of eternal Day.”

THE END.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

'Miss Dixon's mediæval story is very well related. The writer possesses a decided power of clear and often spirited narration.'

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